



JOHN FERGUSON WEIR (1841–1926)

*And the Weir Family Legacy*

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Cover: John Ferguson Weir (1841-1926), *Bride's Roses* (p.5)

*JOHN FERGUSON WEIR (1841–1926)*  
*And the Weir Family Legacy*

April 20 - June 1, 2013

## INTRODUCTION

In collaboration with the descendants of John Ferguson Weir, Vose Galleries is pleased to present *John Ferguson Weir (1841-1926) and the Weir Family Legacy*, which explores the lives of two generations of the Weir family: Robert Walter Weir (1803-1889) and his sons, John Ferguson Weir (1841-1926) and Julian Alden Weir (1852-1919). Together, these three artists form the nucleus of one of the most illustrious artistic families of the nineteenth century.

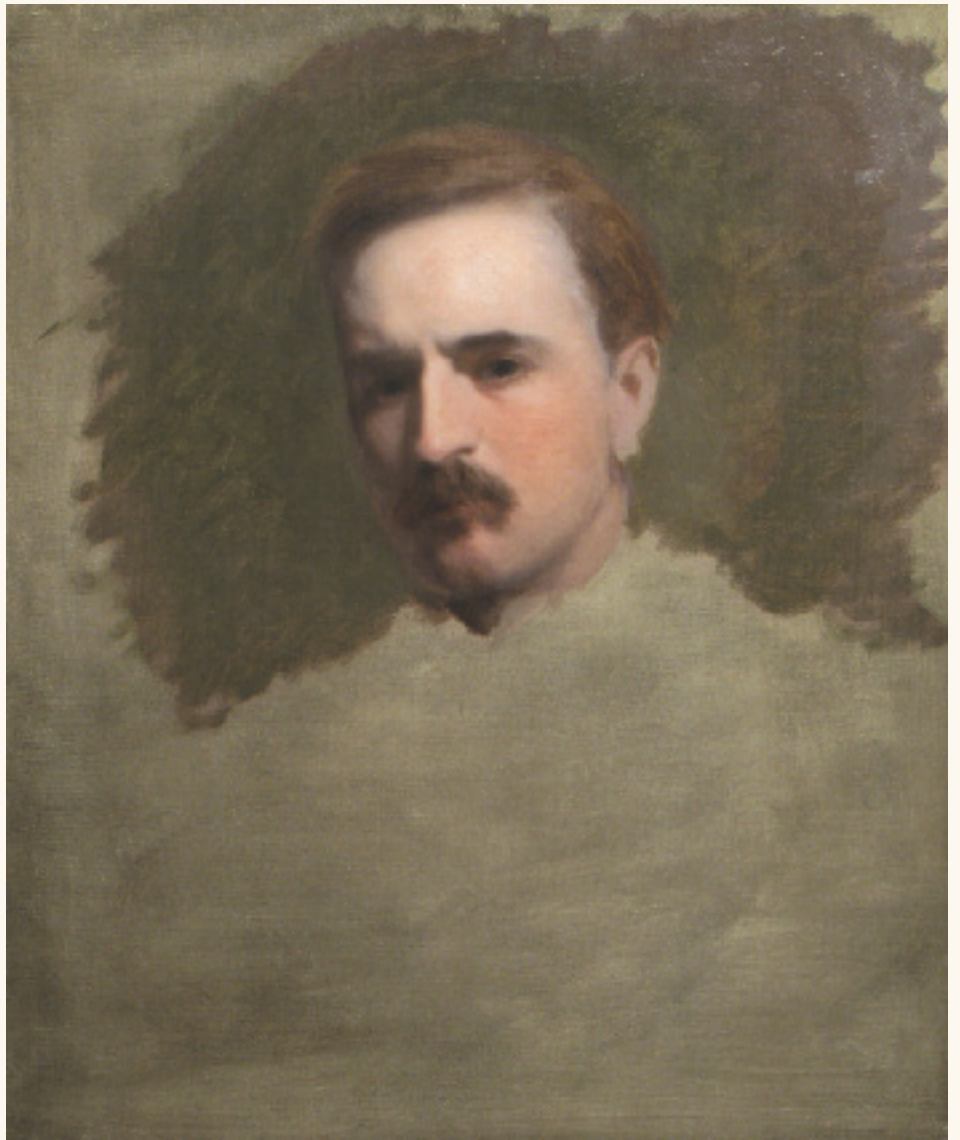
Focusing primarily on the life of John F. Weir, the exhibition features fifteen rare paintings which have been housed in the Weir family home in Princeton, Massachusetts, since John's death in 1926. John was trained by his father, who taught drawing at the United States Military Academy. The young artist began his painting career as a resident of the Tenth Street Studios in New York City, where he became associated with the leading painters of the mid-nineteenth century. John quickly became known for three famous canvases done there in the 1860s. The enthusiastic response from the first painting, *An Artist's Studio*, resulted in his election as an Associate of the prestigious National Academy of Design. *The Gun Foundry*, painted two years later, led to his appointment as a full Academician, and in 1868, *Forging the Shaft* was exhibited there as well. With his reputation firmly established by the age of twenty-eight, Yale University appointed him its first director of the Yale School of the Fine Arts, the first studio art school on an American campus, modeled after the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Serving as its director for forty-four years, the school became a leader in professional art education, exploring the myriad artistic changes flourishing from the 1860s to the early years of the twentieth century.

Vose Galleries' exhibition follows a recent traveling exhibition organized by the Brigham Young University Museum of Art. Titled *The Weir Family, 1820 – 1920: Expanding the Traditions of American Art*, the exhibition featured seventy-five carefully edited paintings. After premiering at the BYU Museum of Art in 2012, the exhibition traveled to the New Britain Museum of American Art, New Britain, Connecticut, and then to the Mint Museum, Charlotte, North Carolina, finishing early this year. The extensive accompanying catalogue features over 150 images and seven scholarly essays that chronicle the transatlantic encounters of a family of artists who helped to shape the legacy of American art.

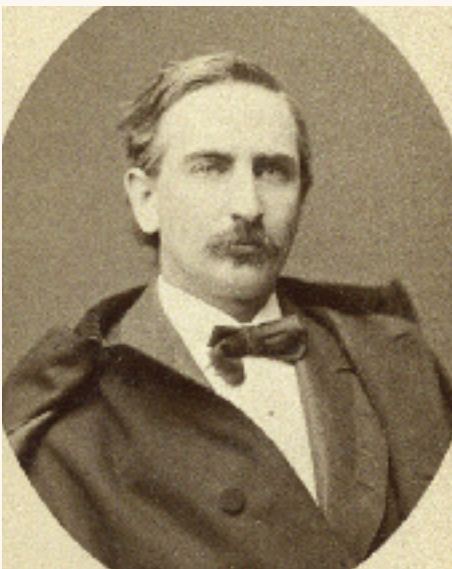
We would especially like to thank Betsy Fahlman for her thoughtful essay in the catalogue accompanying *John Ferguson Weir and the Weir Family Legacy*. She is the foremost scholar on the life of John Weir, having published the first monograph on the artist in 1997, *John Ferguson Weir: The Labor of Art* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997).

And, finally, we have thoroughly enjoyed working with Jim, Dain, and Tinka Perry, three siblings who can claim John F. Weir as their great-grandfather. Their dedication to the memory and reputation of their forebear and their careful record keeping have made it possible to highlight the accomplishments of this very talented artist.

Abbot W. Vose  
Marcia L. Vose  
Carey L. Vose  
Elizabeth V. Frey

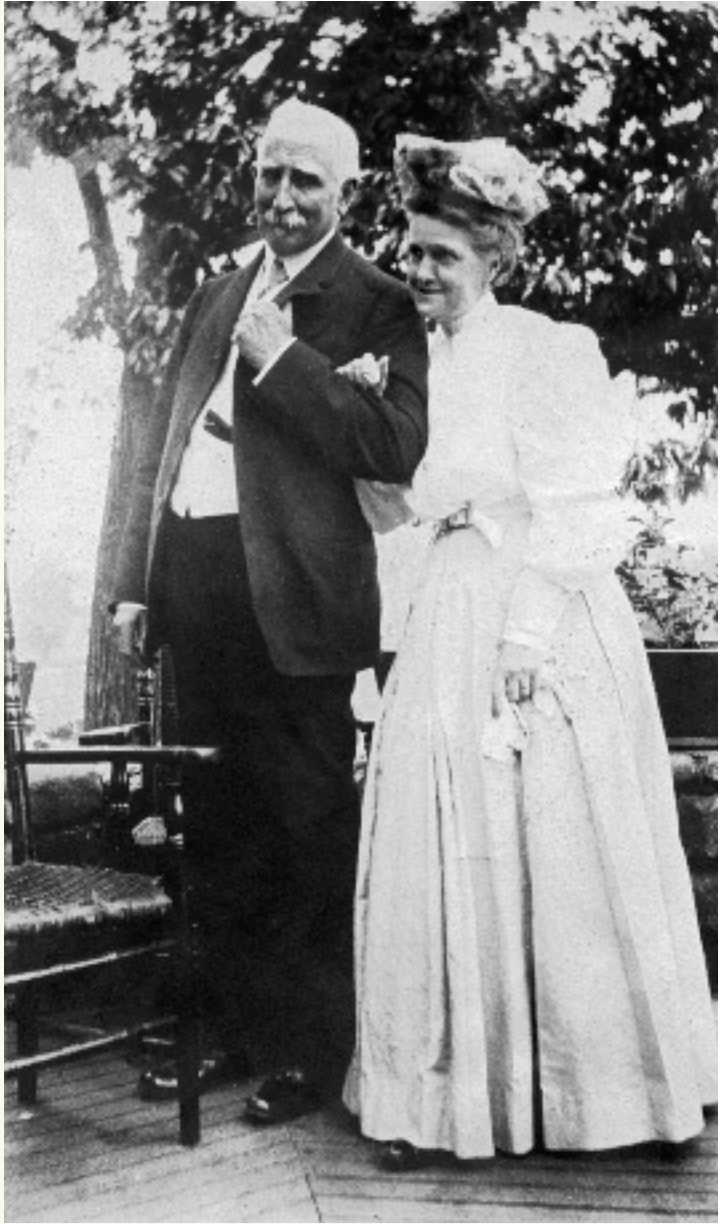


John Ferguson Weir (1841-1926), *Self-Portrait*  
Oil on canvas, 24 x 20 inches



John F. Weir, 1875





**John Ferguson Weir and Mary French Weir, circa 1917**

*“Well, my darling...it has been an evening of triumph for me. When I entered the Atheneum with [Sanford] Gifford I was greeted on all sides with compliments. So much so that I was quite overwhelmed and could scarcely preserve my dignity (which you know never was much). My hand was shaken most cordially by all the artists, while they expressed their liking of my work [The Artist’s Studio]. You will forgive my telling you all about it in such a ways as I could tell no one else, for whatever good comes to me I want always to hasten to you with it, for you have ever been the one to inspire me on to all that’s good and high and noble, and to you I should always bring all the fruits of your inspiring love.”*

-Letter from John to Mary, January 20th, 1864,  
regarding John’s painting of his father’s studio at West Point



John Ferguson Weir (1841-1926), *Bride's Roses*

Oil on canvas, 12 3/4 x 16 inches

Signed and dated upper right: *Feb'y 5 1890/ JFW to MFW*

# JOHN FERGUSON WEIR (1841-1926) AND THE WEIR FAMILY LEGACY

## by Betsy Fahlman, Arizona State University

### RECLAIMING JOHN FERGUSON WEIR

John Ferguson Weir was a member of a distinguished artistic family whose legacy spans a century of American art history. With his father Robert Walter Weir (1803-1889) and his half-brother Julian Alden Weir (1852-1919), the three artists made significant contributions to the building of arts institutions in America, to the professionalization of art training in the United States (collectively, Robert and John taught for eighty-six years), to the exploration of new subject matter with John's industrial canvases, and finally to engaging modern styles with Julian's Impressionist works.<sup>1</sup>

John's early artistic career was impressive. He made his debut as a Hudson River School painter with his first major canvas, *Hudson Highlands, West Point, Summer Afternoon* (1862, New-York Historical Society). This handsome picture portrayed the vistas that were among the most stunning along the river (and close to the Weir family home). It was an ambitious beginning to a long artistic career, and one that showed him fully capable of competing with other notable artists in this genre. Commissioned by a leading New York collector, it enabled John to establish his credentials with a skilled summation of the landscape of his youth. Two years later he followed its success with *An Artist's Studio* (1864, Los Angeles County Museum of Art), an image of the labor of art inspired by his father's painting room at West Point, which had been his first introduction to art. With *The Gun Foundry* (1864-66, Putnam County Historical Society) and *Forging the Shaft* (1866-68),<sup>2</sup> he created a pair of dramatic themes unique in the history of nineteenth century American art.

Yet of the three Weir artists, John remains the least recognized, despite his singular artistic, administrative, and pedagogical accomplishments. When *An Artist's Studio* is discussed, it is often to explicate Robert's work, not John's remarkable homage to his father. *The Gun Foundry* is regularly part of comparative discussions of *Ironworkers—Noontime* (1880-1, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco) by Thomas Anshutz, but as a counterpoint to the later canvas, rather than as a work worthy of discussion in its own right.

Yet many of America's leading museums possess important examples of John's work, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the New-York Historical Society, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the New Britain Museum of American Art, the Florence Griswold Museum, the Butler Institute of American Art, the Addison Gallery of American Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Yale University Art Gallery, the latter of which has the largest collection of his work. While his work is often displayed at these institutions, that his paintings have never been the subject of a solo museum show, the sort of exhibition that firmly establishes an artist's reputation, is the reason that he has remained less well-known than his father and brother.<sup>3</sup> John Ferguson Weir had but a single one-person show in his lifetime, a group of fifty-three paintings held at the Providence Art Club in 1915, two years after his retirement from Yale.

John made his name with the four paintings he did between 1862 and 1868, works that garnered for him membership in the National Academy of Design, and an offer to become the first director of the Yale School of the Fine Arts. He assumed his duties in 1869, and remained there for forty-four years. Never again would he be able to spend the time in the studio that he had been able to for the seven years before he moved to New Haven, where administration steadily absorbed most of his time. But his industrial subject matter alone demonstrates that he merits a prominent place in the canon of American art history.

### JOHN FERGUSON WEIR: A DISTINGUISHED CAREER IN THE ARTS

John spent the first two decades of his life in the richly historic environment of the United States Military Academy at West Point, founded in 1802. Drawing became part of its curriculum the next year, and Robert served as Professor of Drawing at the Academy between 1834 and 1876. He was the longest serving and most distinguished of the artists to occupy this position. The Weir household was an active one, as Robert married twice and his two wives bore sixteen children during the forty years between 1817 and 1857.



Robert's painting room, as well as his library and collection of copies and prints, were John's artistic education. His father also impressed him with his dedication to teaching. The example Robert set for a professional life outside the Academy was another important influence on John. Robert was an early participant in the National Academy of Design, America's leading arts organization, first exhibiting at that institution in 1827, the year after it was founded. He became an Associate Academician in 1829, and a National Academician in 1831, and for the next thirty years was a regular participant in its annual exhibitions. Five years after becoming an Academician, Robert received a commission to paint a mural for the United States Capitol rotunda, *Embarkation of the Pilgrims at Delft Haven, Holland, July 22nd, 1620* (1836-43), a work whose prominent venue has ensured his reputation.

A lively intellectual life centered on the fine arts and literature flourished on both sides of the river, and the Academy's proximity to the picturesque country seats of the Hudson River cultural aristocracy enabled Robert to establish close relationships with the artists and Knickerbocker writers in the region. Literary themes are common in his work as seen in his graceful drawing, *Woman with Mandolin* [p.9]. John's earliest known painting is a Hudson River landscape dating from 1858, one of about thirty small views he executed, selling them for small sums to residents and visitors to the Academy.

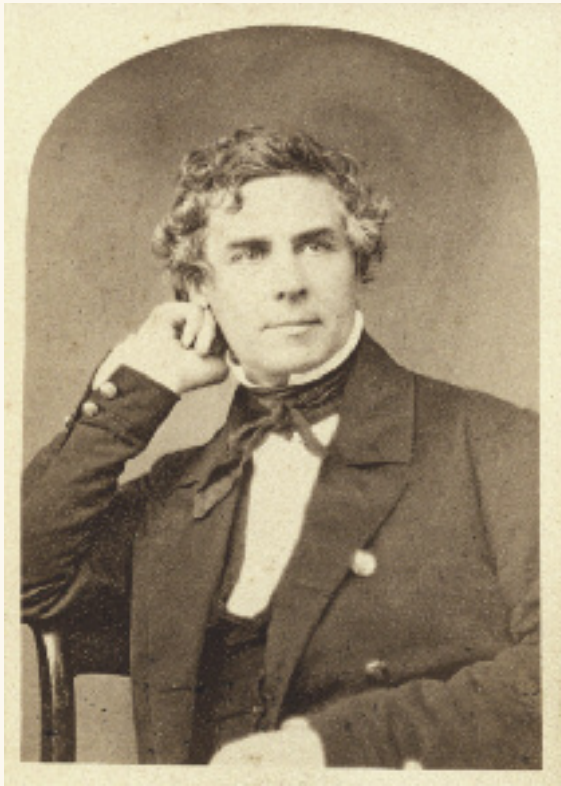
With the commencement of the Civil War, John enlisted for a short term of service of three months at the beginning of the conflict. When he mustered out, he moved to New York in November 1862, taking a space in the famed Tenth Street Studios, where many of the city's leading artists were based (it was the first building of its kind in America). He soon began to make a name for himself with his Hudson River canvas of 1862, a work that showed his skills to advantage in a well-established theme. He followed this canvas with *An Artist's Studio*, in which he presented an exemplar of a scholarly painter's life in his cluttered work room. Finally came the great industrial canvases, finished in 1866 and 1868, respectively. Forceful renditions of modern industrial history, they are pendants of Peace and War (though they were never displayed together).

His hard work was rewarded with his election to the National Academy of Design in May 1866, a

milestone he knew was critical to his professional success. It was a truly momentous month for him as he also married his childhood sweetheart, Mary Hannah French (1847-1927). The ceremony was performed by her father, the Reverend John William French (1808-1871), who served as Chaplain, and Professor of Geography, History, Ethics, and Constitutional and International Law at West Point. John recalled his polymath father-in-law as "a man of wide learning, a classical scholar of fine literary taste and discernment,"<sup>4</sup> an assessment confirmed by the many books visible on the shelves that surround him in John's portrait of the Reverend [p.16]. The wedding ceremony took place in the Church of the Holy Innocents, a small Gothic revival structure Robert had designed twenty years earlier as a memorial to his three children who had died young (he used the funds from his Capitol rotunda commission for this purpose). Robert painted two canvases recording the exterior of the charming church (one is in the collection of the West Point Museum, and the other is owned by the Corcoran Gallery of Art). As the place where many of John's siblings had been baptized, it had many happy associations as well. Robert's sweet pen and ink sketch of the Gothic interior [p.8] pictures a group of five children and three adults in what must have been a typical scene. The couple spent part of their honeymoon at collector James Wallace Pinchot's estate in Milford, Pennsylvania. They returned the following summer, occupying a studio in a picturesque cottage designed by Calvert Vaux, and it was there that he painted *Reading by the Window* (1867) [p.17]. Mary, who is seated reading, is placed in the back of the composition.

The critical and financial success of his four early paintings made it possible for John to make his first trip to Europe. It was a happy time for John and Mary as his career as an artist seemed assured and the position he had recently been offered at Yale ensured them a financially stable future. Of the three subsequent trips he made to Europe—in 1881, in 1901-2, and in 1913—this was most important artistically. Leaving New York in early December 1868, they stopped first in London, and then Paris, before continuing to Rome, where they saw friends from New York as well as his brother-in-law Truman Seymour and his sister Louisa. Seymour, also an artist, had graduated from West Point in 1846 and pursued a long Army career before retiring in 1876.

Continued, p.10



Robert Walter Weir (1803-1889)



Robert Walter Weir (1803-1889)  
*Interior of Church of the Holy Innocents*  
 Ink on paper, 5 7/8 x 4 inches  
 Signed lower left: R. W. Weir



Robert Walter Weir (1803-1889), *Woman with Mandolin*  
Watercolor and graphite on paper, 18 3/8 x 14 1/4 inches



Italy enchanted him; when he reached the lake district of northern Italy, John finally got out his paints. The result was a series of small canvases inspired by the sparkle and reflection of these romantic lakes, including several views of Lago Maggiore (1869) [p.20] that reveal how taken he was with the “color and serenity” and “the opalescent atmosphere”<sup>5</sup> of this attractive region. Of *Lake Lemano* (1869) [p.20], on the Swiss/French border, he observed: “The gentle ripple of the blue waters of the lake laps the shore most soothingly just in front of the house, which faces down the lake westward, and nothing can exceed the sunsets and delicate atmosphere that the eye revels in continually.”<sup>6</sup> He was fascinated by the spectacle of broad expanses of smooth water dotted with picturesque boats against a dramatic mountain backdrop.

In the fall of 1869, after his return from Europe, Weir moved to New Haven, commencing his duties as the Director of the Yale School of the Fine Arts. Founded in 1864, it was the first professional art school on an American campus. The institution occupied a handsome building designed by noted architect Peter B. Wight (1864-65) who was in the process of completing a striking new home for the National Academy of Design (1863-65). Then the largest building on Yale’s campus, it spoke to the ambition of the new institution that would absorb Weir’s intellectual energies for the next four decades.

Weir sought to implement a rigorous academic program of study modeled on that of the prestigious École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and as he was able to expand the faculty his curriculum became more rigorous. He assembled a collection of casts and copies, and took advantage of Julian’s presence at the École between 1873 and 1879 to secure figure studies from his classmates for John to hang in the New Haven studios as exemplars for his students. As in Paris, Yale art students started with sketching from casts before advancing to drawing the human figure, and finally to painting it. Anatomy classes supplemented the live model. The most ambitious of Yale’s art students went to Paris for further study; some were accepted at the École, while others enrolled in the numerous ateliers run by the city’s many academic painters. They found that Yale’s exacting instruction had prepared them well.

John faced many challenges as he developed his program. Although Yale had a distinguished history

in the arts dating from the founding of the Trumbull Gallery in 1832, America’s first college gallery, Yale’s administration gave priority to academic subjects, refusing to recognize artists as equal to scholars (this included John). For many years undergraduates of Yale College were not permitted to take courses in the art school. That the founders stipulated that the school admit both men and women (during Weir’s tenure more than three quarters of the students were female), gave college leaders further pause regarding the new department in their midst.

It did not take John long after settling in New Haven to realize that his time in the studio was going to be severely limited. But when he was able to break away from his many administrative and pedagogical duties, the results he achieved could be remarkable. Beginning in the early 1880s, John experimented with still life subjects, producing a series of handsome floral compositions that align him with a broad interest in the genre among American artists. Julian also began exploring this theme at the same time, and the canvases they produced speak to the renewed closeness of the two brothers and the pleasure they always took in each other’s company. John’s beautiful canvases reveal a painterly freedom rare in his work. *Roses* (1882) [p.13], with its dark background, rich coloration, and handsome composition of a loose bouquet of blossoms and cascading petals, is one of his largest and most assured. Poetic and romantic, he has replaced the tightness and meticulous detail of his earlier paintings with free brushwork and an evident appreciation of the sensuous characteristics of oil paint. John reveals an emotional depth not often expressed in his work. *Bride’s Roses* (1890) [p.5] is a talisman of affection he made to celebrate Mary’s birthday. The flowers tumble out of the vase that is unable to contain them, much like his great love for his wife. John also painted canvases of dahlias, hollyhocks, and iris, and he exhibited several of peonies at the National Academy of Design in 1887 and 1888. In *Still Life with Pink and White Peonies* (1899) [p.15], he sets his bouquet against a light background, recording the loosely arranged blossoms he favored.

Portrait commissions came to him from time to time, but unless he had a strong personal relationship with the sitter or it was an individual who engaged him intellectually, they were often indifferent productions. One of his most striking is *A Study in Black and Gold (Portrait of Miss Coe)* (1882) [p.11], a





John Ferguson Weir (1841-1926), *A Study in Black and Gold (Portrait of Miss Coe)*  
Oil on canvas, 32 1/2 x 24 1/2 inches, signed upper left: *J. F. Weir*, 1882

portrait of Julia Irene Coe (d. 1931), one of the many women who had studied at the Yale School of the Fine Arts.<sup>7</sup> Her closeness to the Art School increased in 1883 when she married Harrison Wheeler Lindsley (1853-1893), instructor in perspective at the Art School. John's intriguing portrait suggests both the influence of American expatriate painter James McNeill Whistler and French artist Édouard Manet. In this work, John reveals his familiarity with the latest continental aesthetic trends.

His daughter Edith Dean Weir (1875-1955) was enrolled in the Art School between 1893 and 1898, earning her Certificate after five years of study. She pursued further instruction in miniature painting with Lucia Fairchild Fuller and Adele Herter, and her work was accepted in exhibitions at the National Academy of Design and the Paris Salon. Also a talented musician, it is in this role that her father has portrayed her in *The Rest, his Daughter Edith* (circa 1900) [p.19]. After her marriage to Episcopal priest James DeWolf Perry in 1908, she rarely had time to paint again.

Edith's husband was a member of a distinguished Rhode Island family, and another of John's portraits honors James's great grandfather, Lieutenant Raymond Henry Jones Perry (1789-1826) [p.22]. It was painted posthumously, as were quite a few of Weir's portrait commissions. Raymond was one of five brothers who served in the Navy, the most distinguished of which were Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry (1785-1819) and Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry (1794-1858), the latter who opened Japan to the west in 1854. During the War of 1812, Raymond achieved distinction for his command of a vessel during the Battle of Plattsburgh.

In 1882, Julian purchased a farm in Branchville, Connecticut, a locale where he would spend considerable time for the rest of his life. The property's proximity to New Haven enabled John to have more contact with his brother, and he made regular visits to this beautiful rural place that offered him a welcome respite from his duties at Yale. He also enjoyed meeting Julian's friends, who represented a younger generation of artists (during the summer of 1881, he spent several months in Europe, and the high point of his travels was the time he spent painting with Julian, John Twachtman, and Walter Shirlaw in Holland). Although he had already been working in this style for some years, Julian's role as a founding member of the Ten American Painters in 1898 officially united this group of American Impressionist artists whose style was becoming widely popular.

John was intrigued by the fresh aesthetic possibilities it offered, and over time, he adopted the high palette and loose brushwork of Impressionism. His Branchville landscapes, some of which date from after 1900, speak to the relaxation he found in the summer, when John would do farm chores in the morning, and paint during the afternoon. The brothers often took similar subjects, as in Julian's *The Farm at Branchville* [p.29] and John's *Farmyard at Branchville* [p.27]; the latter presents a spacious view of the property. His compositions typically featured a broad expanse of landscape in the foreground, and in *The Farm* [p.25] the red barn buildings may be seen in the background.

In late 1901, Weir returned to Europe for the first time in twenty years. Traveling with Mary and Edith, they made their way through sites in Spain, Italy, France, and England. Their first stop was Grenada where he sketched the Alhambra before moving on to Cordova and Madrid. Italy was next on their itinerary, where they remained for six months. By January they were in Rome, traveling to Assisi at the end of February, where they spent several weeks. He found the impressive Franciscan monastery "transcendently beautiful."<sup>8</sup> Among the views he painted was *Basilica of San Francesco d'Assisi, Italy* (1902) [p.21], taking a distant vantage as he had with *The Alhambra* (1902, Metropolitan Museum of Art) so as to emphasize the majesty of the structure high on a hill. After a month in Florence and several weeks in Venice, the Weirs left Italy for France, and finally England, before returning to Connecticut in August 1902. It would be eleven more years before he was able to make another trip to Europe.

After John's retirement from Yale in June 1913, he and Mary summered in Europe, making stops in Paris and Belgium. Most of their sojourn was spent in England, including two weeks in the cathedral town of Winchester, where Julian and Ella were also staying. He appreciated both the pleasant countryside and the opportunity to visit with his brother. He painted about a dozen watercolors in this picturesque town. Several record the exterior of the eleventh century cathedral, such as *Winchester Cathedral* [p.23]. Another pictures the medieval Hospital of St. Cross and Almshouse of Noble Poverty, founded in the twelfth century, and John has skillfully captured the Norman church at the institution's center in *Holy Cross Hospital, Winchester* [p.23]. These are amongst the last works that John painted.





John Ferguson Weir (1841-1926), *Roses*  
Oil on canvas, 33 3/8 x 20 1/4 inches, signed lower center: *John F. Weir / 1882*.

The remainder of his retirement was spent quietly with Mary in Providence, where they had moved to be near Edith and her family. He was greatly saddened by Julian's death in December 1919, and assisted his widow Ella in organizing a memorial exhibition at the Century Association in New York. John Ferguson Weir's own death in April 1926 brought an end to a distinguished life in the arts.

John's long career as an artist and teacher has earned him a prominent position in the cultural history of America. With his dramatic forge paintings, John

portrayed subject matter of broad cultural resonance that remain amongst the most significant produced by any painter in the nineteenth century. As the Director of the Yale School of the Fine Arts, his hard work to establish the institution as one of the nation's leading art schools remains his other important contribution to the history of art training in this country. No other institution was so thoroughly steeped in French Beaux Arts methods as was Yale. With Robert and Julian, John's legacy to the history of American art remains a vital one.<sup>9</sup>

**Acknowledgments:** I am grateful for the scholarly assistance of Marian Wardle (Brigham Young University Museum of Art) and Jochen Wierich (Cheekwood Botanical Garden and Museum of Art).

<sup>1</sup>For John Ferguson Weir, see my book and article, *John Ferguson Weir: The Labor of Art* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997); and "Women Art Students at Yale, 1869-1913: Never True Sons of the University," *Woman's Art Journal* 12 (Spring/Summer 1991): 15-23. For an overview of the Weir family artists, see Marian Wardle, ed., *The Weir Family, 1820-1920: Expanding the Traditions of American Art* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, in association with Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Museum of Art, 2011). For Robert Walter Weir and Julian Alden Weir, see William H. Gerds, *Robert Walter Weir: Artist and Teacher of West Point* (West Point: Cadet Fine Arts Forum of the United States Corps of Cadets, 1976); Doreen Bolger Burke, *J. Alden Weir: An American Impressionist* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1983); and Hildegard Cummings, Helen K. Fusscas, and Susan G. Larkin, *J. Alden Weir: A Place of His Own* (Storrs: William Benton Museum of Art, University of Connecticut, 1991).

<sup>2</sup>The 1877 version in the Metropolitan Museum of Art is a second version of the original that was destroyed by fire in 1869.

<sup>3</sup>The 2011 exhibition organized by the Brigham Young University Museum of Art, "The Weir Family, 1820-1920: Expanding the Traditions of American Art," presented twenty works by John, more than have ever been shown together in a museum setting (several are included in this exhibition at Vose Galleries).

<sup>4</sup>Theodore Sizer, ed., *The Recollections of John Ferguson Weir* (New York: New-York Historical Society and New Haven: The Associates in the Fine Arts at Yale University, 1957), p. 32.

<sup>5</sup>John Ferguson Weir (JFW) to Clara Miller French (CMF), 13 June 1869, John Ferguson Weir Papers, Yale University, Manuscripts and Archives (JFWP/YMSSA), quoted in Betsy Fahlman, *John Ferguson Weir: The Labor of Art* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997), p. 121 (Fahlman).

<sup>6</sup>JFW to CMF, [June] 1869, JFWP, YMSSA, quoted in Fahlman, p. 119. Better known as Lake Geneva, the work is signed in the lower left, "Lake Leman/June 11th 69."

<sup>7</sup>John painted two versions of this portrait. One was purchased by noted Yale paleontology professor Othniel Charles Marsh (1831-1899) in 1880. Sold at his estate sale in 1900, it is now in the collection of the Cheekwood Botanical Garden and Museum of Art in Nashville, Tennessee. In 1882, John painted a replica of the same size for himself, and it is this canvas that has descended in his family.

<sup>8</sup>JFW to Julian Alden Weir, 3 March 1903, JFWP, Archives of American Art, quoted in Fahlman, p. 164.

<sup>9</sup>The artistic legacy of the Weir family has been enriched by several other artists. Truman Seymour (1824-1891) married John's sister Louisa in 1852, and commenced his military career in the Mexican and Civil wars. Irene Weir (1858-1944), the granddaughter of Robert Walter Weir, was the daughter of his eldest son Walter Weir. A niece of both John and Julian, she received her B.F.A. degree from Yale in 1906. Julian's middle daughter Dorothy Weir Young (1890-1947) married Mahonri MacKintosh Young (1877-1957) in 1931. Although not a blood relative of the Weirs, Elliott Daingerfield (1859-1932), who painted *An Old Oak* (c. 1895) [p.30] and *Study for Madonna and Child* (c. 1910) [p.31], was the first cousin, once removed, of Adela Daingerfield Perry (1913-1996), who married James DeWolf Perry IV (1908-1989), the son of John's daughter Edith.

## About the Author

Betsy Fahlman, a professor of art history at Arizona State University, is the author of *John Ferguson Weir: The Labor of Art* (University of Delaware Press, 1997). Her other publications include *Kraushaar Galleries: Celebrating 125 Years* (2010), *Wonders of Work and Labor: The Steidle Collection of American Industrial Art* (2008), *New Deal Art in Arizona* (2009), *Chimneys and Towers: Charles Demuth's Late Paintings of Lancaster* (2007), *James Graham & Sons: A Century and a Half in the Art Business* (2007), and *Guy Pène du Bois: Painter of Modern Life* (2004).





John Ferguson Weir (1841-1926), *Still Life with Pink and White Peonies*  
Oil on canvas, 30 x 25 inches, signed upper left: *Jno. F. Weir / 1899*



John Ferguson Weir (1841-1926), *The Reverend John William French*  
 Oil on canvas, 21 1/4 x 19 7/8 inches  
 Initialed lower right: J. F. W.



**Reverend John William French (1808-1871)**





John Ferguson Weir (1841-1926), *Reading by the Window, Milford, Pennsylvania*  
Oil on canvas, 10 3/4 x 16 inches, 1867



**Mary Hannah French (1847-1927), 1864**



**Edith Weir Perry and her husband James DeWolf Perry, with their son James DeWolf Perry IV (1908-1989), 1909**





John Ferguson Weir (1841-1926), *The Rest, his Daughter Edith*  
Oil on canvas, 58 1/2 x 32 1/4 inches, signed lower right: *John F. Weir*  
Circa 1900



John Ferguson Weir (1841-1926), *Lake Lemman (Lake Geneva), Switzerland*  
Oil on paper on canvas, 8 x 13 inches, dated 1869



John Ferguson Weir (1841-1926), *Lago Maggiore, Italy*  
Oil on paper on canvas, 8 x 13 inches, dated 1869





John Ferguson Weir (1841-1926), *Basilica of San Francesco d'Assisi, Italy*  
 Oil on canvas, 25 x 30 1/4 inches, signed lower right: *John F. Weir*, 1902

*"We left Rome more than a week ago, & now ten days have passed here, & we are so charmed with Assisi that we linger on, though Perugia gleams on the distant hills & at night shines out like a cluster of stars. We are next door to the huge Monastery of St. Francis, with the famous church just across a cloistered court, filled with Giotto's... Our rooms are high up, with balconies from which we look over the Umbrian valley toward Perugia. It is transcendently [sp] beautiful, the whole landscape is like a large opal for color."*

-Letter from John to Julian during a visit to Assisi, Italy, March 3, 1902



John Ferguson Weir (1841-1926), *Portrait of Lt. Raymond Henry Jones Perry, USN*  
Oil on canvas, 33 x 24 inches





John Ferguson Weir (1841-1926), *Winchester Cathedral, Winchester, England*  
Watercolor on board, 10 3/8 x 14 7/16 inches, signed lower right: *J. F. Weir*, 1913



John Ferguson Weir (1841-1926), *Holy Cross Hospital, Winchester, England*  
Watercolor on board, 10 1/2 x 14 3/8 inches, signed lower right: *John F. Weir*, 1913



**The barn at Branchville Farm**

(Photo courtesy of the National Park Service, Weir Farm National Historic Site, Wilton, C.T.)

*“I cannot begin to tell you how happy we are in the dear little home of yours where everything speaks of peace & love & harmony. Not a day passes that we do not speak of you & Anna & as I told you I often feel her presence & am sure that she is pleased that we all love her home so dearly & hold as most sacred all that has been sanctified by her love & yours... The whole atmosphere of the home is sweet & peaceful, & every stick & stone about the place I love. The beautiful fields under the far reaching sky are a perpetual joy, & our drives at sunset make us think & speak of you and Anna... We were all quite excited a few days ago when Paul brought in his hat filled with 12 beautiful little chickens just out, & since then three more have peeped out to the light... The dogs are fine & Diamond looks in splendid condition as John bags oats for him which he enjoys! The moment we come out of the gate he turns his head for his lump of sugar, just as he did to Anna.”*

-Letter from Mary French Weir to Julian Alden Weir, September 1, 1892





John Ferguson Weir (1841-1926), *The Farm, Branchville, Connecticut*  
Oil on canvas, 20 x 24 inches, signed lower right: *John F. Weir*





### **The Branchville Farm**

(Photo courtesy of the National Park Service, Weir Farm National Historic Site, Wilton, CT.)

*“What can exceed the loveliness of this place, the freshness of the air, the calm, the quiet & repose? This time I shall enjoy it quietly, reading, musing, keeping still, communing with the trees, the fowls, the stock, getting all I can out of our short stay...I wish we could be more together, occasionally, though I believe in solitude for the best production. I sit in your studio, smoking my pipe & looking at your canvases & feeling the atmosphere of your aspirations & your work. Sometimes I think we fumble too much. The masters thought out their work & then produced it with directness & facility, which has its charm. But why talk art when the sunlight without is as glorious as it is this morning-so I will desist.”*

-Letter from John to Julian from Branchville, September 8, 1893



John Ferguson Weir (1841-1926), *Farmyard at Branchville, Connecticut*  
Oil on canvas, 20 x 24 inches, signed lower right: *John F. Weir*, circa 1890



## JULIAN ALDEN WEIR (1852-1919)

Best remembered as one of America's foremost Impressionists, Julian Alden Weir first took lessons from his father, and entered the National Academy of Design at age sixteen, where he remained for the next five years. Following the Academy, Julian went abroad to Paris, studying at the École des Beaux-Arts under Jean-Léon Gérôme, whose belief in strong draftsmanship with a careful attention to detail had a lasting influence on the young artist. He befriended several American painters while in Paris, including John Singer Sargent and James Carroll Beckwith, and also associated with his French classmates and the renowned naturalist painter Jules Bastien-Lepage. Julian's relationships with Bastien-Lepage and his European contemporaries lasted for years with return trips abroad, and placed him in the midst of a changing art world, as painters began exploring a balance between their formal studio training and a growing interest in Impressionism.

Upon his return home in 1877, Julian opened a studio in New York City and became an active and prominent figure in the art community, a role he maintained throughout his career. He joined the Society of American Artists, was a founding member of the Society of Painters in Pastel, and took part in numerous art club exhibitions of the period, including the National Academy, the Boston Art Club and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. While keeping to this active exhibition schedule, Julian supported himself with portrait work and followed in the teaching footsteps of his father and brother John, serving on the faculty of the Cooper Union Art School and the Art Students League, and also offered private instruction.

In 1882, Julian acquired a farm in Branchville, Connecticut, and one year later married Anna Dwight Baker. Their marriage was a happy one and she bore him three daughters before tragically passing away during the birth of their youngest, Cora, in 1892. Through the 1880s, Julian's choice in subjects ranged from carefully positioned figure paintings and interiors to more intimate, loosely-styled still lifes, most executed with darker tones and formats he had gleaned while studying the Old Masters. He also began his foray into landscape, but with the death of Anna, found respite from his grief in focusing his energies on a mural for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Later that year, Julian married Ella Baker, Anna's older sister.

Julian was elected a full member of the National Academy in 1886, serving as President from 1915 to 1917, and continued showing with the Society of American Artists until 1897, when he and nine other painters resigned in protest at their strict exhibition standards. This group, later known as the Ten American Painters, included such notables as his friend John Twachtman, Childe Hassam, Willard Metcalf, and the Boston painters Frank Benson and Edmund Tarbell. While most are known for their Impressionist tendencies, the group valued each member's individualism and showed together for twenty years. In addition to his shows with The Ten, Julian held two solo exhibitions in New York in 1907 and 1908, and a retrospective exhibition traveled from several Northeast venues to Ohio between 1911 and 1912.



**John and Julian Weir at Branchville, circa 1915**

(Photo courtesy of the National Park Service, Weir Farm National Historic Site, Wilton, CT)

Throughout his career, Julian was honored with numerous awards and accolades, and his work was collected by major museums during his lifetime, including the Metropolitan Museum. Today, his paintings can also be found in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the National Gallery, the Phillips Collection, and many other venerable institutions. Julian's death in December of 1919 was a loss felt keenly throughout the art community. Vose Galleries, who handled his work in the mid-teens, arranged a memorial exhibition in May of 1920, followed by a large show at the Metropolitan Museum.

*The Farm at Branchville* [p.29] dates from a transitional point in Julian's career, a change initially sparked by the French Impressionists' 1886 New York exhibition, but more earnestly pursued as a result of his close friendship with John Twachtman, with whom Weir would exhibit in 1889 and again in 1893. These exhibitions would soon establish them as leading exponents of the American Impressionist movement.

The Branchville Farm became a retreat and inspiration for Julian and his brother John, as well as artist friends who visited and painted alongside them. Landscapes by these painters, including Hassam and Twachtman, can be found in private and public collections, capturing different locations around the sixty-acre farm. In this composition, Weir chooses the view from behind the family's house, looking northeast, with the edge of the barn on the right and a farmer's wagon in the distance.





Julian Alden Weir (1852-1919), *The Farm at Branchville*  
 Oil on canvas, 24 x 20 1/8 inches

Exhibited: Nassau County Museum of Fine Art, *The Shock of Modernism in America: The Eight and Artists of the Armory Show*, Roslyn, New York, 1984

*“It is often said that an artist puts himself upon his canvases. This is nowhere better exemplified than in the paintings of the late Julian Alden Weir. Those who knew him and his art almost invariably speak of both with deep affection, as well as with enthusiastic admiration. To what other artist of our day is given the unqualified esteem of so many of his brother painters, be they academic, impressionist or radical?...Mr. Weir’s paintings are, first of all, delightful tonal harmonies, tender and atmospheric, with silver greys predominating; there is never a false note.”*

-Robert C. and Nathaniel M. Vose, *J. Alden Weir Memorial Exhibition*, Vose Galleries, 1920



**Elliott Daingerfield, 1910**

*Elliott Daingerfield (1859-1932) was the first cousin, once removed, of Adela Daingerfield Perry, who married James DeWolf Perry IV (1908-1989), the son of John's daughter Edith.*



Elliott Daingerfield (1859-1932), *An Old Oak*  
Oil on canvas, 28 1/8 x 24 1/8 inches  
Signed lower left: *Elliott Daingerfield*, circa 1895

At age twenty-one, Elliott Daingerfield moved from his family's home in Fayetteville, North Carolina, to New York City to further pursue his art studies. It wasn't until 1884 that he first met George Inness, whose influence on the younger artist developed into a close friendship. He eventually moved to a studio near Inness in the famed Holbein building, and Inness became both a patron and strong advocate of Daingerfield's work, buying several canvases himself and often recommending the young Southerner to his own collectors.

From the late 1880s through the 1890s, Daingerfield's choice of subject matter was inspired by his North Carolina upbringing and the farmhands and provincial girls going about their daily activities. He was called 'the American Millet,' after the Barbizon painter Jean-François Millet, famed for his depictions of French country life. With Inness' influence, Daingerfield developed a unique painting technique using layers of glazes and thin coats of varnish, resulting in compositions both rich in color and depth.

Daingerfield traveled to Europe twice in his lifetime, in 1897 and 1924, and journeyed west to the Grand Canyon on commission by the Santa Fe Railroad Company to bring the wonders of the West to the traveling public. The untamed beauty, unpredictable weather and distinct color effects of the Canyon offered an abundance of inspiration for both his allegorical paintings and his poetry. A gifted writer, Daingerfield authored books on George Inness, Albert Pinkham Ryder and Ralph Blakelock, and published articles on color theory.

Daingerfield spent the majority of his career between his native North Carolina and New York. He became a National Academician in 1906 and joined the ranks of the New York Watercolor Club and the Society of American Artists. He exhibited widely throughout New York and frequently at the Boston Art Club from 1895 until 1906. Vose Galleries was a major handler of Daingerfield's work during his lifetime, and held his first public exhibition in Boston in 1914.





Elliott Daingerfield (1859-1932), *Study for Madonna and Child*  
Oil on wood panel, 12 x 9 7/8 inches, signed lower left: *Daingerfield*, circa 1910

*“He is a poet, a dreamer, dwelling in the realms of the Ideal, and all his work shows a deep reverence for the Beautiful.”*

-Robert C. Vose, *An Exhibition of Paintings by Elliott Daingerfield*, Vose Galleries, 1914



## JOHN FERGUSON WEIR: SELECTED CHRONOLOGY\*

1841:

- 28 August; born to Robert Walter Weir (1803-89) and Louisa Ferguson Weir (1807-1845) in West Point, NY.

1845:

- 25 January; death of Louisa F. Weir (age 38).

1846:

- 15 July; R.W. Weir marries Susan M. Bayard (1817-1900).

1852:

- 30 August; birth of Julian Alden Weir (1852-1919) to Robert and Susan Weir.

1861:

- 23 April - 3 June; enlists in 2nd Company (B), 7th Regiment, National Guard, New York State Militia.
- 20 June; engaged to Mary Hannah French (1847-1927).

1862:

- Completes *Hudson Highlands, West Point, Summer Afternoon*, first commission for Robert L. Stuart (1806 – 1866).

- 6 November; moves to New York, taking studio in 10th St Studio Building.

1864:

- January; completes *An Artist's Studio*.
- 7 January; two games of billiards with Sanford Gifford.
- 10 May; elected member of Artists' Fund Society, served as Secretary 1864-65.
- 11 May; elected Associate of National Academy of Design.
- 1 November; plays billiards with Eastman Johnson.
- 3 December; elected member of the Century Club.

Exhibitions: National Academy of Design (NAD): *An Artist's Studio*; Athenaeum Club: *An Artist's Studio*; Brooklyn & Long Island Fair in Aid of the US Sanitary Commission: *An Artist's Studio*; Metropolitan Fair, US Sanitary Commission; Artists' Fund Society (AFS), Fifth Annual Exhibition; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA)

1865:

Exhibitions: NAD; AFS, Sixth Annual Exhibition; PAFA: *An Artist's Studio*

1866:

- 19 February; elected Resident Member of the Athenaeum Association. Nominated by Launt Thompson.
- March; completes *The Gun Foundry*.
- 9 May; unanimous election as National Academician.
- 17 May; marries Mary French, Church of the Holy Innocents, Highland Falls, NY.
- 11 June; with Sanford Gifford to Cold Spring, NY.
- June; begins preliminary studies for *Forging the Shaft* in Milford, PA, as a companion piece to *The Gun Foundry*.

Exhibitions: NAD: *The Gun Foundry*; AFS Seventh Annual exhibition; Brooklyn Art Association (BAA)

1867:

- Paints *By the Library Window*
- 12 January; elected member of the Committee on Admission, Century Club.

Exhibitions: NAD; AFS Eighth Annual exhibition; Exposition Universelle, Paris: *The Gun Foundry*; Yale School of Fine Arts (YSFA); American Society of Painters in Watercolors: *The Gun Foundry*; BAA

1868:

- 14 April; M. F. Weir to reception at NAD, for exhibition of *Forging the Shaft*.
- 24 November; pays for passage to Europe (\$351).
- 2 December; sails to Europe aboard the *Russia*.

Exhibitions: NAD: *Forging the Shaft*; AFS

1869:

- Tour abroad: England, France, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, The Netherlands
- January; *Forging the Shaft* destroyed by fire.
- 16 September; start of term at Yale.
- Elected a member of the CT Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Exhibitions: NAD; AFS; YSFA 1st Annual Exhibition: *An Artist's Studio*

1870:

- 18 December; birth of daughter Louise Ferguson Weir.

Exhibitions: YSFA 2nd Annual Exhibition: *The Gun Foundry*, *An Artist's Studio*

1871:

- Receives an honorary M.A. from Yale.
- Death of father-in-law The Reverend John William French (1808-1871)

Exhibitions: AFS; BAA

1872:

- 8 June; Asher Durand picnic.
- 19 December; John Kensett funeral.

Exhibitions: NAD; AFS; Century Association

1873:

Exhibitions: AFS; Century Association (CA)

1874:

Exhibitions: NAD; AFS; YSFA 5th Annual Exhibition

1875:

- 17 August; birth of daughter Edith Dean Weir (1875-1955).
- Exhibitions: YSFA 6th Annual Exhibition: *Portrait, Interior*; CA

1876:

- July; R. W. Weir retires from West Point.
- Becomes a member of "The Club," New Haven (only member elected that year).
- On the Board of Judges, Centennial, Philadelphia, PA.

Exhibitions: NAD; Centennial Exhibition, Philadelphia, PA: *Lake Maggiore*, *The Gun Foundry*, *An Artist's Studio*, *Forging the Shaft (II)*; BAA: *An Artist's Studio*; YWCA, NY

1877:

- Completes *Forging the Shaft (II)*, noted to be "larger and more dramatic" by the *New York Times*.
- October; J. A. Weir returns to New York.

Exhibitions: Williams & Everett Gallery, Boston, MA: *Forging the Shaft (II)*

1878:

- April; nominates Robert Swain Gifford to NAD.

Exhibitions: NAD; Universal Exposition, Paris: *Forging the Shaft (II)*

1879:

Exhibitions: NAD: *Forging the Shaft (II)*; 7th Industrial Exposition of Cincinnati: *Forging the Shaft (II)*

\*Excerpted from Betsy Fahlman, *John Ferguson Weir: The Labor of Art* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997).

1880:

- Completes *A Study in Black and Gold (Portrait of Miss Coe)*.
- 29 August; death of Sanford Gifford.
- 1 September; J. F. Weir pall bearer and orator at funeral of Gifford.
- October; made Fellow for Life, Metropolitan Museum.

Exhibitions: AFS: *A Study in Black and Gold*

1881:

- 15 June; sails for Europe.
- July; painting trip to Holland, Dordrecht, Popindrecht with J. A. Weir, John Henry Twatchman, Walter Shirlaw.

Exhibitions: NAD

1882:

- J. A. Weir acquires farm in Branchville, CT.
- J. F. Weir paints replica of *A Study in Black and Gold* [p.11] for himself.
- Paints *Roses* [p.13]

Exhibitions: NAD

1883:

- 24 April; J. A. Weir marries Anna Dwight Baker.
- Member: Board of Visitors, Wellesley College.

Exhibitions: NAD

1885:

Exhibitions: AFS: *Roses*

1886:

Exhibitions: AFS

1887:

- Serves on Committee of Design Dedication of Soldiers & Sailors Monument, New Haven.
- Honorary member; New Haven Sketch Club.

Exhibitions: NAD: *Peonies*; 1st Annual Exhibition of the New Haven Sketch Club; AFS: *Roses* (Pink), *Roses* (Yellow); BAA

1888:

- 9 June: elected member of the Players Club.

Exhibitions: NAD

1889:

- March: elected Corresp. Member of the Brooklyn Institute.
- 1 May; death of R. W. Weir.

Exhibitions: NAD: *Portrait of Bradford Ripley Alden, US Army*

1890:

- 5 February; paints *Bride's Roses* [p.5] for M. F. Weir's 44th birthday.

Exhibitions: NAD

1892:

- 8 February; death of sister-in-law Anna Baker Weir.

1893:

- Advisor, Dept. of Fine Arts, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago.
- 29 October; J. A. Weir marries sister-in-law Ella Baker.

Exhibitions: World's Columbian Exposition: *The Forging of the Shaft (II)*, *Roses*

1896:

- 8 October; daughter Louise marries Joseph Denny Sargent.

1898:

Exhibitions: NAD; 3rd Annual Exhibition, Carnegie Institute (CI): *Roses* (Honorable Mention)

1899:

Exhibitions: NAD: *Roses*; 4th Annual Exhibition, CI: *Peonies*

1900:

- 5 September; death of stepmother Susan Martha Bayard.

Exhibitions: NAD; Annual Exhibition, Providence Art Club, RI; 5th Annual Exhibition, CI; 1st Annual Exhibition, New Haven Paint and Clay Club (NHPCC); PAFA: *Peonies* (Salon, Bronze Medal)

1901:

- Completes *The Rest, his Daughter Edith* [p.19]
- Metropolitan Museum purchases *Forging the Shaft (II)*
- 19 March; death of mother-in-law Clara Miller French
- 17 December; to Europe until August 1902

Exhibitions: Exhibition of Artists Formerly Pupils of the Yale School of Fine Arts: *The Rest*; PAFA 70th Annual; Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo, NY (Diploma of Honorable Mention)

1902:

- To Europe and England: Italy (Assisi), Paris, London

Exhibitions: NHPCC, 2nd Annual Exhibition

1903:

Exhibitions: NHPCC, 3rd Annual Exhibition: *Forest of Compiègne*

1904:

Exhibitions: Century, Society of American Artists: *Assisi*

1905:

Exhibitions: 10th Annual Exhibition, CI: *Monastery of St. Francis, Assisi*

1907:

Exhibitions: NHPCC, 7th Annual Exhibition: *Assisi*

1908:

- 2 January; Edith D. Weir marries James DeWolf Perry III
- 24 November; birth of grandson James DeWolf Perry IV

1910:

- 26 July; birth of grand-daughter Beatrice Weir Perry
- James DeWolf Perry III appointed the 7th bishop of Rhode Island.

Exhibitions: NHPCC: *Landscape*

1913:

- June; retires from Yale.
- Summer trip abroad: Paris, Belgium, and England.

• Spends two weeks with J. A. and Ella Weir in Winchester, England.

1915:

Exhibitions: Exhibition of Paintings, Providence Art Club: fifty-three works, including *Assisi*, *The Rest*, *Forest of Compiègne*, *Peonies*, *A Study in Black and Gold (Portrait of Miss Coe)*, *A Connecticut Farm*

1919:

- 8 December; death of J. A. Weir.

Exhibitions: 40th Annual Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture, Providence Art Club: *Portrait*

1920:

- Assists Ella Weir in organizing J. A. Weir memorial at Century Association.

1922:

- Elected honorary member of the NHPCC.

1926:

- 8 April; death of J. F. Weir, buried in Grove Street Cemetery, New Haven.

1927:

- 18 May; death of Mary French Weir.

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